



THE
WRITTEN TRADITION;
OR THE
ONLY DIVINE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE,
VINDICATED AGAINST THE
TRACTARIANS.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH, CHELTENHAM,

November 5th, 1842,

BY THE REV. F. CLOSE, A.M.

WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

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WRITTEN BY

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A PLEA

FOR THE REV. J. J. HADLEY

IN THE

BY THE REV. J. J. HADLEY

OF THE

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OF

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PREFACE.



THE following Sermon is given to the public in a cheap form, principally with a view to give wider circulation to *doctrines* which the Author still hopes only require to be fully known in order to be generally repudiated. He cannot believe that Christians in this land are as yet prepared to adopt tenets so anti-scriptural:—so derogatory not to inspiration merely but to the character of God Himself:—Who, if these opinions can be established, (with reverence be it spoken) is charged with causing a book to be written, professedly for the guidance of fallen man,—“a lamp to his feet, and a light unto his paths”—which man is unable to understand or decypher without the previous possession of qualifications with which no *individual* is gifted, but which can be found only in the “Collective Church!”

The author is the more anxious that these fundamental principles, taught by the leaders of this School—and forming the actual base on which all their errors are built, should be widely known and appreciated, in order that persons unacquainted with the controversy may be put on their guard.

These offensive principles may be ingeniously concealed, “covertly” introduced by “hints and notices,” decorated with the lively embellishments of fancy and fiction—or they may be boldly and flatly *denied*, and the very opposite opinions stated in *words*, afterwards to be attenuated, and refined away—but the readers of all the multifarious publications of the Tractarian School may discover *if they will* that the unsound and fearful tenets of the Leaders of this Crusade against Protestantism—which are here laid bare, form the very *pith and marrow* of the whole—from the voluminous Oxford Tracts, down to the nursery tales, and novels, with which other classes of readers are caught and bewildered.

The Author believing that these publications are most dangerous, as they are most widely and industriously circulated, cannot but endeavour to expose their noxious tendency:—and he can only now pray that it will please GOD to unveil his truth to his people—to discover to them the sophistries of error and superstition, and to preserve to this land the precious legacy of *Protestantism* which our Fathers purchased for us with their blood!

It should be added, that this Sermon not being taken down verbatim by a reporter, the Author cannot affirm that it is exactly what he said in the pulpit—indeed the matter has been considerably increased.

Cheltenham, Nov. 9, 1842.

Advertisement to the Fifth Edition.

The unexpected demand which has been made for this humble production in defence of *Protestant Truth*, encourages the Author to hope that his anticipations expressed in the foregoing preface were correct. The Church of England is not prepared to return to the bosom of the Apostate Church of Rome. The great body of her Laity, and it is hoped, a large portion of her Clergy are not as yet tainted with the popish leprosy—but will abide by the faith of the Venerated Reformers:—May God in mercy preserve it to us in its purity and evangelical simplicity.

Several trifling inaccuracies in the following pages, might have been corrected in this edition; but the Author preferred that the Sermon should remain as originally published, lest it should be affirmed that he had retracted anything which he had advanced.

He commits the cause with confidence to the God of Truth and Love!

Cheltenham, Dec. 20th, 1842.

SERMON.

MARK vii. 15.

“ Making the word of GOD of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye.”

THE services of the Church in which we have this day engaged, have sufficiently pointed out the nature of the awful occurrence which we are met to celebrate, and the devout feelings of gratitude which should rise in our bosoms for the deliverance of our Church and State, our Monarchy, and our Religion from the desperate ruin designed for them by wicked men. The task which now naturally devolves on the Preacher is to examine the principles which could so pervert men's minds as to lead them to contemplate such comprehensive destruction. What was it that occasioned this conspiracy against our King, our Government, and our Religion? Every Protestant is ready with the answer—it was Popery! But this is a comprehensive word, and denotes a combination of principles: it is a wide and turbid stream, rolling its foul waters along, and we must ascend its banks, and trace it to the fountain whence it flows. We are then, perhaps, directed to the middle ages—but still we find the stream of superstition broad and deep. We must ascend still higher—we must come now to the celebrated Nicene Age, to the third and fourth centuries, and there I think we find the hidden fountain of all subsequent evils. It was *this*—the *corruption of the divine infallible rule of faith and practice*—the substitution of *Patristical tradition* for the *written tradition* of GOD—the oral for the written word. Here is the germ of all subsequent error—here is the very foundation of the whole superstructure of the superstitions of the middle and subsequent ages—and here alas is an awful heresy even now revived in the bosom of our English Church.

This then, is our subject to-day—yielding in importance to none—What is the divine rule of faith and practice? What am I to believe as the will of GOD, and where am I to find it? In dependance on the aid of the Holy Spirit, I shall proceed to shew,

1. THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE IS THE ONLY DIVINE INFALLIBLE GUIDE IN FAITH AND PRACTICE TO US:—and then I shall proceed to the painful but necessary task of proving,
2. THAT THIS GREAT PROTESTANT TRUTH HAS BEEN TREACHEROUSLY AND IMPIOUSLY INVADED BY CERTAIN MODERN TEACHERS IN OUR OWN CHURCH.

1. The divine rule of faith, or GOD's revelation of himself has varied in different ages of the world. *In the Patriarchal age*, the Fathers walked with GOD—they were taught by an oral law—GOD spake to them by angelic visitants, or in dreams and visions—no written records of his will existed. Under this dispensation the knowledge of GOD was nearly lost upon earth. GOD therefore called Abraham and deposited truth in him and in his seed—still orally—and by oral tradition from Father to Son. Again the knowledge of GOD was nearly extinguished upon earth,—for when GOD called Moses, the Children of Abraham had forgotten even the very Name of Jehovah, and had sunk deeply into the abominable Idolatries of Egypt. When delivered out of that captivity, and gathered around the sacred mountain in the desert, a new era occurred in the history of revelation. GOD himself, amidst the most solemn and awful tokens, inscribed his will with his own finger upon the miraculous tables of stone—and thus arose the first *Written Revelation*.

From that moment to the days of Ezra, the divine, the infallible rule of faith was to the Israelite of a mixed nature:—there was the *written tradition* gradually accumulating—first the five books of Moses, then the subsequent histories, psalms, prophecies—until the canon was closed by Ezra. But all along this period there was coincidently an *Oral Law!* A casual communication of GOD's will by prophets and holy men who *spoke*, and their *speech* was as holy, as authoritative and Divine as their writings were. GOD's word spoken was as much His

word, as GOD's word written: but with this remarkable difference—that the one was *traditionary* and the other was *not so*. The living, spoken word was for the men who heard it—the written word was for succeeding generations:—we utterly deny that *then* or *since*, or *now* there was any *unwritten, divine tradition*: tradition, which simply means something *handed down*, was always a *written* tradition. No other was ever recognized by GOD nor received a divine sanction.

This then, was the rule of faith from Moses to Ezra—that holy and inspired man arranged the sacred books, and closed them with his own. And then another era in the history of revelation commenced. From that time for four hundred years, until the coming of CHRIST, the Old Testament Scriptures were to the Jews the only, divine, infallible rule of faith and practice.

It is true, a school of traditionists, and Rabbinical talmudists, exactly the prototypes of the schoolmen of Rome, and also of some in our own Church, then arose; who taught that along with the written law, GOD had communicated to the fathers an *oral law*, which they called *tradition*—because they believed that it was handed down by unbroken succession from father to father, and Rabbi to Rabbi, and that having been originally spoken by GOD, it was of equal authority with his written Word. This school was very prevalent in the time of our Lord. And need I stop to prove how indignantly he rejected them and their glosses? Need I do more than point you to the text and context to show you that our Master utterly repudiated the Jewish traditions as a divine Rule of Faith and Practice.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of GOD, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of GOD, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

He then charged them with subverting the fifth commandment, and added in the words of the text—“*Ye make the word of GOD of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.*”

But the force of our LORD's teaching, throughout his personal ministry, proves more than the mere rejection of Jewish tradition—it proves *the Sole divine authority of the then Scriptures*. Who was He? He was GOD manifest in the flesh! He was Immanuel—GOD with us. He had all power, wisdom, knowledge, and the fulness of the Spirit in himself; and he came to establish a new dispensation:—he might, if he had so willed, have exploded the written, as he did the ORAL TRADITION. He needed no helper—no testimony, but his own miracles and teaching. But did he do so? Far otherwise—he rested the proof of his Messiahship, his divine mission, his mysterious nature, and all the doctrines which he taught, upon the authority of the *written Word of GOD*:—“Search the scriptures,” said he “for they are they which testify of me.” To them he sent all cavillers, all opposers. “What is written, how readest thou?” This was his uniform language—even when he contended hand to hand with Satan himself, Omnipotence clothed itself in the written word of GOD, and said—“*it is written again, it is written again!*” Thus he honoured the only Standard of Truth, GOD's written Word.*

The divinely commissioned Apostles followed in the same track. Armed though they were with miraculous powers—gifted with tongues, able to give life to the dead, or to take life away; they too grounded every appeal to their hearers, whether Jews or Gentiles, upon the written word of GOD—they claimed only to be fulfillers and expounders of that word—they never condescended to notice Jewish traditions—but bowed to the Scriptures of GOD as infallible truth—highly praising those who searched them.† It is even more wonderful to reflect that when the LORD the Spirit himself descended copiously on the Church on the day of Pentecost, this great event was vindicated, and justified by reference to the Prophetic Scriptures.‡ The Holy Ghost was guided by his own divinely created rules and prophecies. Such then was the state of things at the opening

* See the following passages: Mark xi. 17. with John ii. 17. Luke xviii. 31. Luke x. 26. Luke xxii. 37. John xv. 25. Math. ii. 5. and xi. 10. and xxvi. 24. Mark ix. 12. &c. &c.

† See among innumerable other instances the following: Acts i. 16. iii. 22-24. iv. 25-28. vii. 52. viii. 53. x. 43. xiii. 23. and 32. 33. xv. 16-18. xvii. 11. &c. &c.

‡ Acts ii. 1. and Joel ii. 28. Isaiah xliv. 3. Ezekiel xi. 19. Zechariah xii. 10.

of the Gospel dispensation—with all its new powers, ordinances, revelations; abolishing oral tradition—it based its claim upon the only *divine tradition, the written Word of God.*

But again a new era breaks upon the Church. The Apostles of Christ claim to be inspired teachers and infallible guides. The rule of faith again becomes to the men of that generation, of a complex character, as under the former part of the Mosaic economy:—*there was God's word spoken, and God's word written*—the oral and the written word:—the living, inspired interpreter, and the Old Testament, together making up the divine rule of faith to *them!* Let it be fully admitted that the Apostles were as much inspired in what they *spoke*, as in what they *wrote*—it was alike the word of God. And doubtless, they said and taught much which has not come down to us, much that we should have been delighted to hear.* This was to them *Oral tradition*—that is, truth divine, delivered by word of mouth. But we shall affirm that *that* part of truth has not come down to us. For now we come to the important fact that these divinely inspired and infallible teachers began themselves to *write*—and certainly within ten years from the death of Christ, the Gospel of St. Matthew was written—not to reveal new truths, but to give permanency to those already known and orally delivered. And most important it is for us to remember in this battle with traditionists, that at least three-fourths of the entire New Testament were written, and were in general circulation among the Churches *during the life-time of the writers*—no dispute could then arise as to the *inspiration* of those books—nor could it be necessary for any church to test them by tradition—or by that ecclesiastical figment—“the *regula fidei*,” oral rules of faith supposed to have been committed to each church by the Apostles,—because they had but to ascertain what was then as easy to know, as whether any book of

* There is a striking reference to this point at the close of St. John's Gospel: where it is stated respecting the actions of our blessed Lord “that he did many other signs which are not written in this book:” (John xx. 30. 31.) but no intimation is here given, nor in the subsequent parallel passage (xxi. 25.) that either his unrecorded deeds or sayings should be handed down by any other means! So far from it, there is the strongest possible affirmation that the *written word* is sufficient for all purposes of faith and salvation: “but these are written that ye might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that *believing ye might have life through his name.*” If the written word is sufficient for *faith* and *life*, for what do we want an *unwritten word?*

a living author of the present day was written by *him* or not—they had but to discover that the writings were *genuine and authentic*, for then their Inspiration followed of necessity, because they were written by inspired men. This was the *test* recognized in the Church even in subsequent times; as appears from Tertullian's controversy against Marcion—if he could show that his Gospel was written by the Apostles, or under the sanction of an Apostle, as St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles were—then the Church would receive it as divine. So that the mode of establishing the canonicity of Scripture contended for by our adversaries is altogether fabulous. Most of the books were received first by the Churches to which they were addressed, then by other Churches, and so on—and the decrees of the first Councils upon the canon of Scripture were not the result of sifting the evidence of the *inspiration* of the books, but just deciding the *fact* of their genuineness and authenticity. I am not now speaking of the redundant evidence of the divine inspiration of God's Holy word, as maintained by Protestant writers—not of its miracles—its fulfilled prophecies, and internal evidences—but I am endeavouring to show how we learn from ancient History that the New Testament came gradually to be received as divine in the Church.

Now it is here—at this period in the history of the Christian revelation, that the desperate and soul-destroying heresy of an ORAL TRADITION crosses our path. There then arose men in the Church who taught,—(and there has been an evil succession of them ever since, alas! unto our own times)—that there was in addition to the written word an oral, divine, and inspired unwritten word communicated to the Apostles—that *that* word, which they term tradition—or “*Catholic consent*,” has been preserved in the Church, and can be ascertained by us through “the precious relics of antiquity,” viz. the Fathers—or creeds, or councils of the Church—that this unwritten tradition is at least of equal authority with the written word; judging from the writings before us, I should say, *superior*,—for if by tradition alone we can know what is Scripture—and by tradition interpreting, we can alone understand it, then the *test* must be greater than the thing tested, and therefore tradition is greater than Scripture! *These doctrines, which are identical with those of the Church of Rome*, have been taught by certain divines in our own church within these few years—doctrines which I believe to be equally opposed to the word of GOD and to our Protestant Church, and utterly

subversive of that faith for which our Protestant Martyrs bled and died. I must therefore boldly and utterly denounce them.

2. I shall now proceed in detail to establish these heavy charges against men who have signed our Thirty-nine Articles; and in doing so, I shall avail myself of the admirable condensation of their errors as given in that truly learned and faithful work which ought to be on the shelf of every Protestant's library, "*Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice.*" And in doing so, I know enough of the writers of this school to make it necessary for me to affirm that I have read the original works and many others of the same character, but that in the midst of accumulating duties it would have been impossible for me to make so able a digest of their errors as is here furnished by my excellent friend and brother. I further premise that my extracts will be from only two of their leading writers, and from the unbridled and daring assertions of Tract 85. Let us then examine their opinions on the relative authority of the *written word*—and the *unwritten* oral tradition. In establishing their Traditional theory they pursue the same course as their Roman predecessors---and to show the necessity of Tradition---they attempt to disparage the Holy Scriptures. But being members of a Church whose articles were written to oppose these very theories, it is necessary to appear at least to hold the Protestant doctrine of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, according to the VI. Article. Hence we notice *ab initio* one lamentable practice with these writers---they will lay down a rule or *thesis* in Protestant language---and in such terms that an unwary Christian will be at once led to commit himself to their guidance---and then whole pages will be devoted to the nullification of the admitted axiom. It is painful to notice such unworthy tactics, but simple-minded Protestants must be put on their guard:---if even in the following extracts this charge is not substantiated, in the judgment of any indifferent by-stander, I shall be happy to withdraw it; but I honestly believe it to be more than borne out even by the three witnesses whom I here produce, and amplification would be easy if my quotations took a wider range.* Thus one who is esteemed

* In Dr. Hook's Sermon entitled the "Novelties of Romanism," precisely the same mode of argument is pursued. He first lays down this Protestant, *this* scriptural canon at the opening of his discourse. "Let me state, in a few words, what their" (that is his own) "principle is. In all questions of doctrine and practice which may arise

the chief authority in this School of Divines writes as follows on scripture and tradition, and their mutual position with each other.† He first states broadly that scripture contains “*all things necessary to salvation*”—“*the saving faith* :”—what need we more, exclaims the honest Protestant? Here is the very principle maintained by the Established Church! But read on, and, in page 369, we are told that the same book is not “*the only ground of the faith*”—nor “*the source of all religious truth whatever*.” (p. 370.) But there is another “*ground of the faith*,” and that is “*Tradition!*” And these two, “*the Bible and Catholic tradition*,” make up “*a joint rule*,” i. e. of faith! (page 327.) And then, according to my judgment, this writer places the evidence of the *genuineness, authenticity, and authority* of “*Tradition*”---(collected as it must be, out of the huge folios of patristic discussion) on the same level with those of Holy Scripture itself, for he says—

“We have as little warrant for rejecting ‘*antient consent*’ (that is ‘*tradition*’—‘*the unwritten word*,’ &c.) as for rejecting *Scripture* ‘*itself*.’” (p. 325.)

in the Christian Church they *fully admit that the first and last appeal lies to Holy Scripture. To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* And where both parties agree in their interpretation of the words of Scripture, this appeal will bring all controversies to the most satisfactory determination. The private Christian, looking into this true mirror, discovers the blemishes and defects in his own conduct; and the Church *puts on her ornaments, and is sanctified and cleansed by the Word.*” But from that line forward, his whole argument goes to show that so far from scripture being a sufficient ground of appeal even in controversies of faith, if there is no further appeal questions can never be decided. “*But a little observation will convince us that the controversies which arise in the Church can seldom be decided by this appeal.* The records of past ages prove this, and daily experience shews it. Each party in a dispute claims Scripture for its own side, and, as the sense of Scripture, it zealously maintains its own interpretation. If there be, then, no further appeal, the question can never be decided. There is, therefore, *another test*, which, in the opinion of those I am defending, Scripture itself allows and sanctions,—the *testimony of the Church from the beginning.* And to this test St. Paul, in our text, sets us an example of making an appeal. *We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.*”—The Holy Apostle would have been rather surprised to find his *oral* instructions thus applied to “*customs*” and “*Churches*” arising 1700 years after he was dead, and of which he knew nothing!

† Mr. Newman’s Lectures on Romanism, and Popular Protestantism. N.B. Neither the name of this author, nor of Mr. Keble, was mentioned in the discourse he preached.

Can this divine seriously think so? Is he as sure that he can collect "*Antient Consent*," from the ponderous and incoherent materials whence it must be culled, as that he possesses God's holy word when he holds the Bible in his hand? Here is the first step towards overthrowing the evidence that the Bible is the word of God—for if his position be true and "catholic consent" has as sure a claim upon us as the holy scriptures have—and as in the judgment, I hope of the majority of Protestants, "catholic consent" is based upon most frail and doubtful evidence—then the Scriptures have no better foundation to be received as the word of God!

But this author proceeds further to define the nature of his "*Catholic Consent*" and the weight to be attached to it.

"Catholic tradition" is "a *divine* informant in religious matters," (p. 229.) "The unwritten word," (p. 355.) This unwritten word is "*antient consent*," (p. 325) often spoken of under the name of "*antiquity*." "We agree," says the writer, "with the Romanist in appealing to antiquity as our "GREAT TEACHER," (p. 47.)

"Both Romanists and ourselves maintain as follows:—that whatever doctrine the primitive ages unanimously attest, whether by consent of Fathers, or by councils, or by controversies, or in whatever way,—whatever may fairly and reasonably be considered to be the universal belief of those ages, is to be received as coming from the apostles." (p. 62; see also pp. 297-9.)

Will PROTESTANTS so easily agree with the Romanists and Tractarians on this point? We believe the holy writings of the Apostles are the only certain *traditions* which can be traced to them.

But in order to establish the *Canon* of an *unwritten word* this author proceeds, still in company with his Roman confederates, to make all the evidence of the inspiration of Scripture itself to rest upon tradition:

"How do we know that Scripture comes from God? It cannot be denied" (but we deny it in toto) "that we of this age receive upon general tradition both the bible itself, and the doctrine that it is divinely inspired." (p. 42.) "The sacred volume itself as well as the doctrine of its inspiration comes to us by traditional conveyance," (p. 44-5.)

If by tradition these writers meant only the historical facts handed down to us by the Church in successive ages, even then, this could be admitted only as one *portion* and not a large one of the evidence in favour of

scripture:—but it must ever be remembered that they mean by *tradition* an *oral communication* from the Apostles themselves—and therefore *inspired*---and preserved without loss to its inspired character some how, or somewhere in the Church or by the Church. The very existence of such a tradition we repudiate---and consequently deny that Scripture rests on so baseless a foundation.

But still pursuing the downward course of Roman Controversialists---this divine of the Anglican Church proceeds to establish the Authority of his Tradition not only as the chief witness to the canon of scripture---but as the Interpreter by which alone we can understand it! And this he attempts to do by raising the old popish libels of the *obscurity* and *insufficiency* of God's Holy Word.

“The need of tradition arises only from the **OBSCURITY** of Scripture, and is terminated with the interpretation of it.” (p. 384.) “Scripture does not interpret itself, or answer objections to misrepresentation. We must betake ourselves to the early church and see how they understood it.” “**SCRIPTURE WAS NEVER INTENDED TO TEACH DOCTRINE TO THE MANY.**”

Hear this, Protestant Britain! Withdraw the Bible from the poor, the illiterate, the people, the many—it was never intended to teach *doctrine* to them! When there was **ONLY** the Old Testament, in the dark age of St. Paul, “All scripture was profitable for *doctrine*”---“that the man of **God**”---whether poor or rich---learned or unlearned---“might be *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works;” but now, the greater “*obscurities*” of the New Testament have been added to it, forsooth it has lost its power---and without the traditions of the antients, and the comments of the learned, it cannot teach doctrine to the many! Would to **God** it had taught better doctrine than this to some of the learned schoolmen---and then none among them could have penned the following fearful confession!---

“I would not deny as an abstract proposition that a christian may gain the whole truth from the Scriptures, but would maintain the **CHANCES ARE VERY SERIOUSLY AGAINST A GIVEN INDIVIDUAL**. I would not deny, but rather maintain, that a religious, wise, and intellectually gifted man will succeed: but who answers to this description but **THE COLLECTIVE CHURCH?**” (pp. 189-90.)

Here is a sample of that kind of reasoning with which I have solemnly charged these sophistical writers. Here the author seems first to *admit* that "A CHRISTIAN" may gain the whole truth from scripture—but the *chances* are against him!! The only possible chance in his favour would be that he was previously—" a *religious—wise—and intellectually gifted man*"—so we are not to come to the word of GOD to get our *religion*, our *wisdom*, and our *gifts* there—but if we are first religious, wise, and talented then there is a *chance* in our favour! No! there is not, says the writer—even then—*there is not!* and why? because no such person was ever found—no one answers to it but "THE COLLECTIVE CHURCH!" so after first admitting his "abstract proposition"—he completely denies it—*utterly denies that any individual in the world can make out the whole truth from Scripture!* It is only the "*Collective Church,*" who can do it---merge your *individuality* in the Church---and then you will become wise unto Salvation!

If this is not the very essential doctrine of Romanism, I do not know what is! We do not wonder after this that our author affirms, although it is absolutely destitute of proof---"that acute men among the ultra Protestants have discovered that the very elementary principle which they have adopted of the BIBLE without note or comment, being the SOLE AUTHORITATIVE JUDGE in controversies of faith, is a SELF-DESTRUCTIVE PRINCIPLE!" (p. 35.)—This is as much a figment as Tradition: and until I learn who these acute Protestants are who have surrendered the great Protestant principle, I shall only conceive that this is the author's way of stating his *own opinion*. The rule is certainly destructive of his traditions. Well may *such* a writer add "SCRIPTURE is but the DOCUMENT of APPEAL," "CATHOLIC TRADITION is the AUTHORITATIVE TEACHER of Christians." (p. 343.) then neither am I a Christian, nor are thousands of good Protestants, *Christians*---for we deny such an *authoritative teacher* with indignation!

But what shall we say to the still more fearful assertion that "the Catholic doctrines of the TRINITY, INCARNATION, AND OTHERS SIMILAR TO THEM, are the true *interpretations* of the NOTICES contained in scripture of those doctrines respectively." (p. 153.) What! is there only a NOTICE of "the INCARNATION" of CHRIST in Holy Scripture, requiring the interpretation of tradition for us to make it out of this obscure book? Christians may well tremble when such frightful positions as these are

taken by one of the teachers of our church. But no wonder, for this author adds---“*the Bible does not carry with it its own interpretation.*” “*Tradition is partly the interpretation, and partly the SUPPLEMENT of scripture.*” Those who understand the meaning of the word *supplement* will feel that the writer here falls under the charge of “*adding to God's word.*” May the consequences of so doing be averted from him! He furnishes us with a *supplementary Gospel*---that is *Tradition*---and this because CHRIST'S Gospel is *obscure*, and not intended “to teach doctrine”---“to the *many*”---or, as we have *proved*,---“to any individual”---but only to the Church Catholic!

Let it be remembered, that all these are the positions not of an erratic disciple, or young enthusiast of this school, but of one of the most cautious, acute, and ingenious leaders of this class of divines. We shall find that others have proceeded much further.

But, if we turn to another distinguished writer of this school, we shall find an agreement with the former.* He declares those persons to be in error “who reject the notion of a rule of faith made up of scripture and tradition together.” (p. 82.) He denies that scripture contains the whole “orthodox faith”---but rather “the whole orthodox faith includes the written word,” and consists of “the whole creed of the Apostolic Church as guaranteed to us by Holy Scripture, and by consent of pure antiquity.” Let Protestants mark that---the Bible does not contain “the orthodox faith,”---but the Bible is itself contained by *it!* The Apostle's Creed and tradition are the standards, and you are fortunate if you find the Bible a part of your creed!---But the author continues---

“*Tradition*” is the record of that “*oral teaching*” which the “*Holy Ghost inspired.*” (p. 24.)

“Precious apostolical relics.” (p. 42.)

“Not a few fragments yet remain, very precious and sacred fragments, of the *unwritten teaching* of the first age of the Church.” (p. 32.)

Church tradition is “*practically infallible.*” (p. 142.)

* Mr. Keble.

The former author denies this: he says "the *Church is not infallible*"---but he affirms that "*she can make no mistake!*" What wretched sophisms---and distinctions without a difference! How unlike plain, honest, Protestant truth! Tradition is further exalted by this writer to a level with Scripture itself!

"If we will be impartial we cannot hide it from ourselves, that God's unwritten word, if it can be any how authenticated must necessarily demand the same reverence from us, and for exactly the same reason, because it is his word." (p. 26.)

But this is just the point at issue between us: if we could be sure that there was such a thing as "God's unwritten word"---and it could be "*authenticated*" "*any how,*" we should humbly receive it: but in the absence of anything like proof of this, we deny that tradition is God's unwritten word. Meanwhile let it be observed that this author *does* look upon Tradition in this light, and therefore that he reverences *tradition* equally with the written word.

But he next affirms that this Oral tradition was the authoritative test by which the inspired writings of the Apostles were tested.

"As long as the canon of the New Testament was incomplete, the unwritten system served as a test even for the Apostles' own writings" "Apostolical tradition was DIVINELY appointed in the Church as the touchstone of canonical Scripture itself." (pp. 26, 27.)

"The very writings of the Apostles were to be first tried by it before they could be incorporated into the canon." (p. 28.)

What groundless assertions are these! Where, how, and when was "*Apostolical tradition* DIVINELY appointed in the Church," for such a purpose? And why should the genuineness even of the later epistles be tried by this uncertain touchstone---*a verbal tradition*---rather than by the entire Old Testament, and the already received portions of the new? The object is to exalt the oral and to degrade the written tradition! The balance between them in the eyes of this divine is very equal; for he says that "between the *traditional* and *written relics* of the Apostles" there is this difference, "that in the *former* the *things* only, in the latter the *very words are holy!*"

Like the former author he contends for the obscurities of Scripture, and seems in the following passage to state that they were purposely so ordered by God himself:---

“If so it had pleased ALMIGHTY GOD the Scriptures might have been all CLEAR OF THEMSELVES. Men may go on imagining the advantages of such a dispensation until they have persuaded themselves THAT THINGS ARE REALLY SO ORDERED.” (p. 88.)

To suppose that the scriptures are all clear of themselves, is therefore an imagination---and to affirm that “*the Bible can be understood without traditional aid*” is an “*objectionable statement.*” (p. 88.)

But Scripture is not only *obscure*, but *deficient*---and there must be a *supplement* as the former author taught!

“Tradition” reveals truths “not contained in Scripture.”

“The paramount authority, for example, of the successors of the Apostles in Church government; the three-fold order established from the beginning; the virtue of the blessed Eucharist as a commemorative sacrifice; infant baptism; THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY as contained in the Nicene Creed; all these, however surely CONFIRMED from Scripture, are yet ascertainable parts of the PRIMITIVE UNWRITTEN SYSTEM of which we yet enjoy the benefit.” (pp. 31, 32.)

Upon this bold statement I would only say that if the Doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the Nicene Creed is not found in Scripture, I am not bound to believe it, nor do I believe it because it is in a *creed*, but because I am satisfied it is in Holy Scripture! It would clear up the subject very much if these authors would give us a plain and intelligible description of “*the primitive un-written system,*” to which they appear to think we are so deeply indebted.

But a writer of a bolder stamp must be cited---one who dares to draw an illustration of Holy Scripture, for which an itinerant preacher of infidelity might be brought before the civil power---the author of Tract 85;---a tract which I hesitate not to call a blasphemous production against GOD’S WORD!

“The GOSPEL DOCTRINE of message” is but “INDIRECTLY and COVERTLY recorded in Scripture under the surface.”

“ Scripture is not one book—it is as if you were to seize the papers or the correspondence of leading men in any school of philosophy or science which *were never designed for publication*, and bring them out in one volume. You would find probably in the collection so resulting, many papers begun and not finished—some papers systematic and didactic, but the greater part made up of *hints* or *of notices*, which assumed first principles instead of asserting them—or of discussions on particular points which happened to require his attention. I say the doctrines, the first principles, the rules, the objects, of the school would be taken for granted alluded to, implied, not stated. *You would have some trouble to get at them*; you would have many *repetitions*, many *hiatuses*, many things which looked like *contradictions*; you would have to work your way *through heterogeneous materials*, and after your best efforts there would be *much hopelessly obscure*; or, on the other hand, you might look in vain in such a casual collection, for some particular opinions which the writers were known nevertheless to have held, nay, to have insisted on. SUCH, I conceive, with limitations presently to be noticed, IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE!”

There are “limitations.” There is an article of our Church upon this subject. We are therefore told that “at least as regards matters of faith. Scripture does contain all that is necessary for salvation; it has been over-ruled to do so by Him who has inspired it.” (p. 32.)

“This antecedent improbability” (i. e. of Scripture containing the faith) “tells even in the case of the doctrines of faith as far as this, that it reconciles us to the necessity of gaining them indirectly from Scripture, for it is A NEAR THING (if I may so speak) THAT THEY ARE IN SCRIPTURE AT ALL; the WONDER IS THAT THEY ARE ALL THERE; *humanly judging*, they WOULD NOT BE THERE BUT FOR GOD’S INTERPOSITION; and therefore since they are there by a SORT OF ACCIDENT, it is not strange they shall be BUT LATENT there, and only indirectly producible thence.” (pp. 32—4.)

I should hope such language as this has never been sounded within these walls since Popery was expelled from them---*if then!* Shall such libels be uttered against the Word of the living GOD, and shall not the indignant voice of Protestant Britain put them down? Shall this miserable man venture to call the Scriptures a heterogeneous mass of old manuscripts never intended to be published? But I will only say GOD deliver us from such wickedness,---“my soul come not into their secret!”

The identity of Romanism with the tenets thus exemplified, will be evident from the following quotation from its distinguished advocate Bellarmine:---though his language reads mild, and almost Protestant after the former:---

“ We assert that there is not contained in the Scripture in express terms the whole necessary doctrine, either concerning faith or concerning manners ; and, therefore, that beyond the written word of God, there is, the divine and apostolical traditions.”

“ Scripture is very often ambiguous and obscure, so that unless it be interpreted by some one who cannot err, it cannot be understood, therefore it is not sufficient alone. It is to be observed that there are two things in Scripture, the written words and the meaning contained in them. Of these two, the first is possessed by all. The second is not possessed by all, nor can we in many places be certain of the second, but by the addition of tradition.”

Now we meet these Popish and Tractarian theories by a direct negative---we utterly deny the existence of any such divine rule of faith as the *unwritten tradition*---we affirm that such a rule was unknown to the most ancient fathers---that the Word was never used by them in the sense now attributed to it---and that the *tradition* spoken of by them was the written tradition---the sacred Scriptures! This is proved to demonstration by Mr. Goode, (page 66---76.) Whence it comes out that “ Evangelical tradition,” means the *Gospels* and “ the *Apostolic* tradition,” the Epistles! Various of the Fathers are quoted, to show that they so used these terms ---although Athanasius is quoted by the Tractators, as if he authorized “ *Patristic tradition*,”---or the oral tradition handed down by the Fathers ---when he actually intended to refer to the writings of the Apostles, the Apostolic written tradition!---The testimony of Cyprian on this point appears to be final:

Cyprian says “ Whence is that tradition? Does it descend from Dominical and Evangelical authority, or does it come from the commands and epistles of the Apostles? For GOD testifies that those things are to be done which are WRITTEN. If, therefore, either it is commanded in the Gospel, or is contained in the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles let that DIVINE and HOLY TRADITION be observed if in anything the truth has not been steadily maintained, let us return to the Dominical original and THE EVANGELICAL and APOSTOLICAL TRADITION.” (Ad originem Dominicam et Evangelicam et Apostolicam traditionem revertamur.) Epist. 74. ad. Pomp.

And what is still more conclusive, if possible, we find Jerome, when translating a passage of Polycrates, translating the words *to evangelion*---the *Gospel*, (referring to Scripture,) by “ *evangelica traditio*,” the Evangelical tradition.

It is not a little remarkable, that this rule of Catholic consent, or unwritten and "all but infallible tradition," fails them upon the most vital question. If there were any one point on which such consent can be proved, it would be with respect to the sacred canon of Scripture itself. How subversive then of all their plausible and tangled theory is the *fact* that *their rule* of faith, or Catholic consent, determined, in the fourth century, that the *Epistle to the Hebrews was not inspired!*---We may confidently ask the disciples of this school therefore, upon what authority they receive this Epistle as canonical? Will the determination of the Church in a subsequent---and according to them---more corrupt age, set aside the decree of the earlier Church? Is their rule of faith, and their faith itself, so pliant that they can thus humbly follow their varying mistress in her "*all but infallible*" decisions?

It is pleasant to turn from such writers to some of those whom they claim as sanctioning them, but who thus distinctly decide against them. Thus Athanasius, quoted by the Protestant Stillingfleet:---

Bishop Stillingfleet in his work on "the Grounds of Protestant Religion," says, 'Wise men though they think it highly improbable that there should be antiquity, universality and consent against the true and genuine sense of Scripture, yet when they consider this way of Vincentius, with all those restrictions, cautious and limitations set down by him, (1. 1. c. 39,) *THEY ARE APT TO THINK THAT HE HATH PUT MEN TO A WILD-GOOSE CHASE TO FIND OUT ANY-THING ACCORDING TO HIS RULES; and that St. Augustine spake a great deal more to the purpose when he spake concerning ALL the writers of the Church 'that although they had never so much learning and sanctity he did not think it true because they thought so, but because they persuaded him to believe it true either FROM THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE or some probable reason.' (p. 279. ed. 1665.)

We may well conclude this part of our subject by addressing the Tractarians in the words of Dean Sherlock---intended for the Papists, but most strictly applicable to our opponents:---

† "We do not," says Dean Sherlock, "charge them with denying in express words the authority of the Scripture to be a rule, but with saying that which is equivalent to it,—That the sense of it is so various and uncertain, that no man can be

* The former part of this sentence was not quoted in the pulpit.

† (A Papist not misrepresented. See p. 19.)

sure of the true meaning of it, in the most necessary and fundamental articles of the Faith, but by the interpretation and authority of the Church, which does effectually divest it of the authority of a rule, for that is *my rule* which can and must direct me; which, it seems, is not the Scripture considered in itself, but as interpreted by the authority of the Church WHICH MAKES THE FAITH AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHURCH, NOT THE SCRIPTURE, MY IMMEDIATE RULE."

And now do any yet ask, why are you so anxious upon this subject, so vehement in your denunciation of a class of writers who have received more gentle treatment at the hands of some excellent and distinguished Divines? I answer *first*---because I have proved that they dishonour and impugn the supremacy, the glory and sufficiency of God's holy word: and I am very zealous for the LORD GOD of Hosts, and for his eternal word, which he honours above all his name.

I answer *again*---that I condemn and denounce these writings not because they *tend to Popery*, but because *they actually are so!* It is now matter of sufficient proof that, upon the great fundamental doctrine of traditional authority, their views are identical with those of Rome---they differ from her not at all in their *definition* of the *rule* of faith, but only in its application to some particular tenets. I am a Protestant, and these writings are papistical, and therefore I cannot but *protest* against them according to my ordination vows.

But I thirdly, thus warn you against them because their doctrine of tradition once admitted, there is no error, no superstition, no folly, which may not be palmed upon us. From this fruitful source the Church of Rome draws all her pestiferous and soul-destroying errors---she cannot find them in Holy Scripture---nor can the Tractarians find theirs in that book---they tacitly admit this for they add a *supplementary Gospel*. Who then is to decide if this rule be once admitted, what is Catholic consent, and what is not: if, as we have seen, no "*individual*" is sufficiently wise to understand God's book without another divine teacher,---who shall unravel the mysteries contained in the Patristic folios? For instance---Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexdrinus, Tertullian and others, taught (with reverence we would even repeat it) that the sacred person of our LORD was *deformed!!* Are we to believe this? Was this established by Catholic consent? How many Fathers go to make up your "all but infallible rule?" or must we receive the more Catholic consent of a subsequent age, which

painted the person of the Saviour as eminently beautiful, carved the image of his body, and put it on a cross, and bowed down and worshipped it? Was this Catholic tradition? or which are we to chose? We say not these things to depreciate the Fathers---we admit their due importance and authority---we believe that amidst much that was the result of a superstitious age there is to be found in their writings the evangelical truth---their testimony on many points is invaluable; but when men magnify their testimony, and make it the channel of an unwritten word, which is to be rejected on peril of being charged with infidelity, we must strip these Fathers of honours which GOD never conferred upon them, and shew them to be but men---*uninspired men*.

But I have yet a *fourth reason*---the most painful of all, why I must to my latest breath and at all hazards denounce the writers of this school; it is this---*because they bring us to the very brink of Infidelity itself!* I mean not simply that as the Papists, so they, by striking away the only real foundations of faith, and substituting surreptitious ones, and by adding to the *matter* of faith things not required of GOD to be believed by us, do tend to lead men to scepticism---the step between believing *too much*, and believing *nothing*, being an easy and natural one---but I mean that these writers themselves by reasoning which might make an angel weep, do cast us upon the quicksands of *universal doubt!* This shall be their own showing also:

“We for our part,” says the leading Tractator first quoted, “have been taught to consider that faith in its degree as well as conduct must be guided by probabilities, and that doubt is ever our portion in this life. We can bear to confess that other systems have their unanswerable arguments in matters of detail, and that we are but striking a balance between difficulties existing on both sides—that we are following as the voice of GOD what on the whole WE HAVE REASON TO THINK SUCH.” (p. 129.)

So this is all that the written and unwritten word together can do for us ---the joint rule of faith! We must strike a balance of probabilities---and follow after all our own “*reason*”---that way, which *on the whole* seems most like the voice of GOD! Nay worse than this---

“According to English” (we deny it—*Romish*) “principles, faith has all it needs in knowing that God is our Creator and Preserver, and that he MAY, IF IT SO HAPPEN, HAVE SPOKEN Doubt may ever be said to be implied in a Christian’s faith.” (p. 103.)

It is then a chance whether he has spoken at all! And *doubt* is an essential element of a Christian's faith! Yes, says the latter witness---

“Evidence complete in all its parts leaves no room for faith.” (P. 82.) And to put an end to all doubt as to the doctrine they hold on this subject the former authority openly tells us that “to accept Revelation at all! we have but PROBABILITY TO SHOW AT MOST, NAY, TO BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF AN INTELLIGENT CREATOR.” (P. 69.)

Oh fearful quicksands of uncertainty and doubt on which tradition shelves us! We have no surer moral evidence even for the very existence of a Creator “*than probability at Most!*” and one profane calculator reduces this probability to a fractional nicety and declares the odds in favour of revelation are as 3 to 2! Ecclesiastical gamblers!---(Tract 85. page 113.)---they had rather reduce the evidences of revealed religion and even the existence of a God to a “*probability at most*” than resign their fictitious standard of Tradition---upon which all other religious fictions are suspended!

And must we not tremble when such doctrines as these are circulated with zeal and assiduity worthy of a better cause? “This leaven is fast leavening the whole lump”---circulated through every channel---in baby tales for the young---in bewitching stories, novels and romances---tricked out in fiction---vituperated in anonymous Reviews and periodicals---mystified in university lectures, the noxious heresy concealed and “covertly conveyed,” “by hints and notices”---the poison is diffused in the court, the camp, the bar, the social circle and the news-room---and unless some antidote be applied where will it be restrained? Those who think God himself has communicated his will to man by hints and notices---in a book out of which it is difficult to extract a meaning---will not scruple to circulate their opinions by the same means---and hence it is necessary to warn men not to be deceived by a strong admixture of truth---by plausible and cautious statements---but to believe that the awful doctrines now exposed are hid “covertly” in these publications---and that they are nothing but the ancient leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees---to whom our LORD addressed the words of our text:---“Ye make the word of GOD of none effect by your tradition which ye have delivered. And many such like things do ye!”

Brethren beloved---cleave to the Holy Scriptures---the most holy word of God, as the only divine infallible rule of faith and practice. Believe the accumulating evidence of their inspiration---of which the testimony of the Ancient Church is only a part---lay hold especially of *one* evidence of their divine original, which, alas! I look for almost in vain in the writings, on which I am animadverting---I mean the internal power of God's word---the secret energy of truth---accompanied by the sufficient teaching of the Holy Spirit. We admit that there is much in Holy Scripture difficult to be understood---that there are depths unfathomable by mere human reason---we do indeed need some infallible teacher to help and guide us! But whom shall we choose? The traditional figment of the "*unwritten word*"---or shall we seek God's Holy Spirit as David sought it, "LORD open thou mine eyes that I may see wonderful things out of thy word."

Blessed be God, here is the infallible teacher promised to all that seek him---one to whom a High Church writer points so powerfully, that I cannot help adducing his testimony---a truly spiritual one---I mean Archbishop Laud himself, whom the Tractarians profess to follow:---

"The credit of Scripture to be driven, resolves, finally, into that faith which we have touching GOD himself, and in the same order. For as that, so this hath three main grounds to which all others are reducible. The first is, the TRADITION OF THE CHURCH; and this leads us to a reverend persuasion of it. The second is, the LIGHT OF NATURE The third is THE LIGHT OF THE TEXT ITSELF, IN CONVERSING WHEREWITH WE MEET WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD, INWARDLY INCLINING OUR HEARTS, AND SEALING THE FULL ASSURANCE OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF ALL THREE UNTO US. And THEN, and NOT BEFORE, WE ARE CERTAIN, THAT THE SCRIPTURE IS THE WORD OF GOD, BOTH BY DIVINE AND BY INFALLIBLE PROOF." (Reply to Fisher, p. 74.)

A beautiful, a magnificent idea! In our lonely, individual converse with Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit *meets us*, to teach, to guide, to comfort, and to lead us to the only certain faith! We bless God for such a testimony from such a quarter, and rejoice that, amidst so much of an opposite character in this remarkable man, we find that which, if pursued, must have led him to spiritual truth! May the Tractators follow him in *this!*

I have only one word more to add. You are now solicited to contribute to the support of an institution of a truly admirable character, which supplies curates and lay readers, (many of the former, and few of the latter,) to assist the over burdened labourers in our Christian vineyard; and I have selected this Society---*The Church Pastoral Aid Society*---for this occasion simply because it is a truly *Protestant Society* ---one of its chief designs is to preserve biblical truth in the ministry of the sanctuary---it will not propagate Popery, nor Tractarianism---it has *tests*, which have been very naturally objected to by those whom they would exclude. But, in times like these, beloved, we have need to rally round that which is Protestant---to uphold all that is not "*pure antiquity*," but *purely scriptural*, and to unite our prayers, our efforts, our alms to promote the circulation of that truth which alone is primitive, being bound up in the word of eternal life. May GOD, in his mercy, preserve this to us and to our children, and enlarge your hearts on this and all similar occasions to embrace it for yourselves, and to propagate it in the whole world!

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